



Native American Affairs Initiative

Major Accomplishments and Impacts 2003-2015

- **State Recognition of Native American Entities:**

Prior to the passage of legislation in 2003 to create the Native American Affairs Initiative at the SC Commission for Minority Affairs, there was no formal process for State Recognition. In 2004, legislation passed creating the regulations for the State Recognition Process. In 2007, these regulations were amended and are still used by the Commission to promulgate regulations and oversee the State Recognition process on behalf of the State of South Carolina. The first entities were recognized in 2005. This year we celebrated the 10-year Anniversary of State Recognition with a press release. To date, the SC Commission for Minority Affairs has recognized 8 Tribes, 5 Groups, and 2 Special Interest Organizations. The Commission is currently in the final stages of the process for a 9th Tribe.

IMPACT: The process of State Recognition not only allowed an “invisible” population of people to claim their heritage, it also opened the doors for increased funding and opportunities for these underserved communities. Additionally, it has forever changed the history of our State and Country, allowing for South Carolina to join the ranks of other states with STRONG Indian Affairs programs. This has also opened the door for opportunities to collaborate with Federal Tribes and other national/regional organizations as we seek to increase programs, funding and opportunities for Native American Indian people of SC.

- **Cultural Competency and Awareness Technical Assistance:**

Prior to 2008, the SC Commission for Minority Affairs did not have a “Cultural Competency/Awareness” Component for training. Staff was limited to culturally specific training on their program. The Coordinators (African American, Hispanic and Native American) developed this component in collaboration with Georgetown University’s National Center for Cultural Competency and others, utilizing best practices, to develop training and technical assistance for the State. The Commission has entered into multiple contractual agreements, MOU’s and other partnerships throughout the state and region to develop Cultural Competency Policies, Strategic Plans, Outreach Plans, Agency/Individual Assessments, trainings and workshops. Additionally, Coordinators serve on multiple boards, committees and work groups to address these issues on behalf of the Commission and the populations we serve.

IMPACT: Working with state agencies, federal agencies, non-profits and others, the SC Commission for Minority Affairs has been able to affect change in policy on a large scale through the utilization of technical assistance and training to increase awareness, understanding, outreach and cultural competency.

- **Census 2010 Outreach and Tribal Statistical Areas Mapping**

Prior to the 2010 Census, State Recognized Native American Tribes were not included on the National Tribal Statistical Areas Maps produced by the US Census Bureau. After being contacted by the Census GIS department, staff worked with Tribal Communities and Census Staff to map

out areas of their communities for inclusion. In addition to the mapping project, Commission staff served as official outreach partners through a collaboration/partnership agreement with the Census. Census Staff worked with the Commission to identify communities and areas of outreach. The SC Commission for Minority Affairs' Native American Affairs Coordinator made contact decimated 6000+ informational flyers, emails, items to Native American Communities/Individuals.

IMPACT: Census has the largest count of Native American Indians today date with increased participation from tribal communities. Additionally, South Carolina's State Recognized Tribes were included on the National Tribal Statistical Areas Map for the first time.

- **Native American Heritage Month**

Prior to 2008, Native American Heritage Month was not widely celebrated by those outside of Native American Indian Communities and Federal Offices. The Native American Affairs Initiative took the lead role in development of a standardized Native American Heritage Month Proclamation issued each November by the Governor. Additionally, there was not centralized system/calendar of events throughout the State. Staff developed a State Native American Heritage Month Events Calendar in 2011 that is utilized State-wide. In addition to the calendar of events, staff helped establish or contribute to multiple state, federal and non-profit's Heritage Month celebrations by serving on planning committees, speaking and technical assistance. In 2013, a Concurrent Resolution initiated by an Native American Advisory Committee member and a current Commission Board member passed, allowing for the first Native American Heritage Awareness Day on November 18th. The Commission has held two events on this day in 2013 and 2014 at the SC State House and currently beginning to plan our third event for 2015.

IMPACT: Through this cultural and heritage events, citizens of our state become educated and aware of Native American Indians in our State and Country. Many citizens do not know about this "invisible" population and the plight they face on a regular basis. These events give this population and the Commission a platform to educate and bring awareness about current issues, needs and concerns of the community while celebrating a rich cultural heritage that has deeply shaped the State of South Carolina and the United States. In 2013, the Native American Heritage Day Events allow leaders to speak about why there heritage/culture was important to them and their people. In 2014, the SC Commission for Minority Affairs partnered with Harvard University's Project on American Indian Economic Development to present a "Building Our Nations" Town Hall and State House Press Conference focusing on issues of Economic Development in their Communities. These events reach 100's to 1000's of people each year.